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EDUCATIONAL NEWS AND EDITORIAL COMMENT

THE SUPERINTENDENT AND THE BOARD OF EDUCATION

In the two greatest school systems in this country the question of the authority of the superintendent and the question of the relation of the superintendent to the Board of Education has arisen for very emphatic discussion during the past few months. Mrs. Young as superintendent of the Chicago city school system resigned, "for the purpose," as she put it "of maintaining harmony in the administration of Chicago schools." The Board of Education requested her to withdraw her resignation after a protest on the part of many citizens, especially the women of the city. Mrs. Young made it clear during the whole of the discussion that the fundamental question at issue was the question of her ability to carry educational policies through the Board of Education. Some of the members of the Board of Education, on the other hand, were evidently determined to deal directly with such matters as the selection of textbooks. In New York City the symptoms of dissatisfaction on the part of the Board of Education with its sphere of activity appear in somewhat more aggressive form. The president of the Board in a report addressed to that body on July 9 of this year writes as follows:

When you began your work of the present year there was existent in this building a time-honored tradition that a Board of Education should not presume to deal first-hand with education itself, but should be confined to matters of finance, equipment, and perfunctory voting upon measures to be perfected by those whom it was a usage to designate as educational experts. Some years of adherence to this theory had built up a system so unsatisfactory as to result in a compulsory investigation of the schools and in published declaration of their formalism, rigidity, and obsolescence. In a review of the investigators' findings, the head of the commission concluded the service of education in this city to be seriously defective and the Board of Education at not sufficiently close quarters with its work. But several months before the publication of these criticisms you, from your own experience and from your own desire of progress, had anticipated them by co-operative action in taking up, considering, and passing upon vital questions directly concerned not only with sites, buildings, and supplies, but with the actual training of children.

In accordance with this policy you have provided for a special committee to represent you in the preliminary steps leading to the nomination of district superintendents. Your High-School Committee has performed a similar service affecting the nomination of high-school principals. In both of these changes

you have realized that your responsibility to the city is not fulfilled by a perfunctory vote, but that, as you are held ultimately responsible, your judgment should find the freest exercise in important matters of this kind and early enough in the proceedings to escape embarrassment through desire to avoid personal disparagement of candidates nominated without consulting you.

Both of these cases bring up in very concrete form the general administrative question of the relation of the Board of Education to the conduct of schools. It is the belief of educational people that a city superintendent is the technical officer who is charged with the responsibility of conducting the schools. When the president of the New York Board exemplifies a different theory by saying that the responsibility for the appointment of high-school principals belongs to the Board of Education, he makes a statement that is unacceptable to the superintendents of schools throughout the United States. It is indeed true that the Board of Education will feel the effects of any bad appointments to high-school positions. They undoubtedly will be called upon where the high schools are unsuccessful to see to it that the fundamental organization of the schools is modified, but in general they are more likely to find it expedient to organize the schools through the superintendent than to try to judge of the qualifications of high-school principals directly in their board meetings.

The report of the president of the New York Board is an added evidence of a hostility against the superintendent of schools on the part of certain members of the New York Board which has been no secret for some time. Superintendent Maxwell is, however, able to cope with the situation without being brought to the point of offering the board his resignation.

The schools of either one of these two great cities present unique problems in school organization, and sooner or later there will undoubtedly be a much more generally accepted principle underlying the relations between board and superintendent. In the meantime these cases make it clear that the educational people of the country have it as one of the important obligations to define clearly the relation between the superintendent of schools and the boards of education.

FURTHER STATEMENTS REGARDING THE PROBLEMS CONFRONTING THE SUPERINTENDENT

The Bureau of Education at Washington is performing a very distinct service by sending out certain inquiries to different classes of schools and furnishing to the press of the country the returns on these

questions. Recently an inquiry was sent to superintendents of cities of from 2,500 to 30,000 population asking them to make a statement of the questions which gave them the greatest difficulty in organizing their schools. Two pages of returns from these inquiries are put into the hands of the editors of journals and newspapers. It is not possible here to enumerate all of the difficulties encountered by these superintendents, but the following list will appeal to those who have charge of schools and serve to set forth very vividly the difficulties encountered by school superintendents in the ordinary routine of this work:

1. How to test the efficiency of teachers. What should be the standard.
2. How to deal with backward and retarded pupils.
3. How to secure competent janitors.
4. How to arouse interest among parents. (This question was asked in nearly all the letters.)
5. How to control mothers' associations.
6. How to prevent individual school-board members from interfering with teaching methods and discipline.
7. How to make and keep teachers progressive in scholarship and professional training. Many superintendents complain of older teachers who have taught for a number of years and appear to be unresponsive to new ideas.
8. How to secure and retain competent teachers and how to prevent the election of incompetent "home teachers" who may be related to some member of the board or to some prominent citizen. Judging from the tone of the letters received, not many superintendents in cities of less than 10,000 population are consulted when teachers are elected. One superintendent writes, "I wonder in how many cities of 30,000 population and less the superintendent is allowed to select his own teachers. In my experience I find boards of education less willing to take the superintendent's recommendation in regard to teachers than in almost any other thing, and I am at a loss to understand why, unless it is a matter so personal to them that they hesitate to follow the recommendations of the superintendent in this respect." Many others write in substance: "Boards are loath to give the superintendent a free hand in selecting teachers. They are prone to consider teaching positions as half perquisites for relatives, a daughter of an old friend or business associate. They also employ 'home teachers' often irrespective of qualifications in preference to competent teachers who live in another city or state." A superintendent writing on the same question, however, says: "I believe that in a majority of instances where nepotism prevails, where personal favoritism influences the board, where politicians name the teachers, the fault is with the superintendent rather than with the board. A tactful and fearless superintendent can secure the co-operation of his board if he will."

REFERENCES ON VOCATIONS

The Brooklyn Public Library has issued a pamphlet which will be of interest to many teachers. It is a list of books and references on vocational choice, guidance, and training. The list shows such documents on these subjects as are to be found in the Brooklyn Public Library. It can be obtained by sending to the Library, 26 Brevoort Place, Brooklyn, N.Y. Teachers who wish to inform themselves on this subject and teachers who are looking for material to put in the hands of their students will find this list very helpful in directing them to a large body of literature. It is a commonplace in present-day education that the children ought to be informed about possible occupations. Some of the subtitles that are typical and show the range of topics covered in the list are Telephone and Telegraph Operating, Stores or Shops, Retail Merchandise, the Stage, Stenography and Typewriting, School and Philanthropic Work, Railroading, Salesmanship, Nursing, Navigation, Music, Millinery, Library Work, Forest and Lumbering, Flower Growing or Selling, and so on through a long series of occupations which ought to be of interest to school children.

SOCIAL CENTERS

The Russell Sage Foundation issues a pamphlet prepared by Mr. C. A. Perry entitled *How to Start Social Centers*. This pamphlet gives very helpful and explicit advice on the methods of getting people and funds together for the "wider use of schools." For example, one section of the pamphlet is devoted to the discussion of the topic "creating public sentiment," another to "removing legal obstacles." The pamphlet will help teachers or citizens not connected with the school who wish to organize this type of work.

CREDIT SUPERVISED AND UNSUPERVISED

The following item is clipped from the *Topeka Capitol*.

Sunday-school teachers who attend the state normal schools will be given advanced standing for their Sunday-school experience, according to plans announced yesterday by the new board of administration. Credits are to be allowed not only Sunday-school teachers, but also to any who have taken active part in church work that might have a bearing on teaching in the grade school of the state. The plans for this innovation are being worked out by the board.

"The board of administration," said President Ed F. Hackney, "together with Presidents Butcher and Brandenburg and Principal Lewis, the new heads

of the state normal schools, are working out a plan for giving advance standing in the normal school to those persons who have had teaching experience, supervising experience, experience as teachers in Sunday schools and other church work, and to those who have had experience in other life work that would especially qualify them for the teaching profession."

Evidently the recognition of all possible forms of intellectual activity is becoming very active in Kansas. In the meantime it seems not inappropriate to point out a difference between credit with supervision and credit without supervision. When an institution gives its certificate to an individual, that institution presumably guarantees to the world that the individual in question has performed some worthy intellectual work. This guaranty ought certainly to be based upon some knowledge of the work for which credit is given. Many of the public schools are now recognizing the propriety of supervising the work that is done at home, such as work in music or in some practical activity which is not provided for within the school walls. But in all of the cases where this is done properly there is some effort made to ascertain the quality and value of the work for which credit is given. Doubtless in the enforcement of this new rule in Kansas the same vigorous effort will be made to find out the quality of the work. If the State Normal School can in this wise assume supervisory control over the work of Sunday schools, much will be gained for education. There is danger, on the other hand, that the temptation will be very strong to grant credit for work that has not been properly supervised. If that is done in this or any other institution, the certificates granted by the institution will deteriorate just in proportion to the freedom with which credit is given for work which is not supervised.

AN EDUCATIONAL SURVEY

The *Daily Republican News*, of Hamilton, Ohio, devoted three full pages of its issue of Saturday, June 7, to a thesis entitled "Industrial Education for the City of Hamilton, Ohio," prepared by Mr. Winifred Hugh Brown, a student in the graduate department of education at the University of Wisconsin. The fact that this thesis attracted attention in the city as an important document on which to base the organization of the schools is itself an indication of the general interest which is aroused these days by any careful and systematic examination of the school situation. The thesis itself is a notable contribution to the general literature of school surveys and to the literature of industrial education. Mr. Brown gives some figures which show the efficiency of the schools

of Hamilton in retaining the children of that city. He then proceeds to outline the industrial condition, comparing the situation in Hamilton with the situation that has been studied in Massachusetts. He gives the classification of the causes why children leave school. He gives a detailed statement of the arguments in favor of industrial education from the point of view of the manufacturers, the labor union, and the interests of the community. He then describes the various lines of work which can by any means be regarded as contributing to industrial education in the city. The whole report is well worthy of imitation and illustrates the possibility in each city of working out in detail on thoroughly scientific methods a statement of the local conditions upon which the organization of the school system must be based.

AN EXPERIMENT IN VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

An experiment in vocational education is to be tried in Louisville, Ky. The Consumers' League of that city has been co-operating with the Board of Education in the effort to open some sort of special training for school children who would otherwise drop out of the school. A member of the League, commenting on the new plan, makes the statement that only 10 per cent of the school children in the city of Louisville go to the high school. For the remaining children of the city it is important that some kind of educational opportunity should be organized. The Consumers' League therefore secured, with the co-operation of the Board of Education, the advice of Professor Leavitt, who visited the city and looked into the commercial and educational conditions and finally recommended the establishment of a special course for children of fourteen years of age. In this class, which is to be under the direction of a special teacher whose salary is paid by the Consumers' League, factory conditions are to be imitated as nearly as possible and articles of commercial value are to be produced for use in the schools. The school opens in the autumn. The teacher who is to have charge of the class has been spending the summer in acquiring some additional experience. She is a teacher of experience in general school work and is now to have charge of this special problem.

Such an experiment is of very general interest at this time when the question is being raised whether the "regular" school organization can manage vocational education. Let private agencies try supporting the school board in a straightforward experiment rather than bring chaos into our already complex school organization by starting experiments without the aid of trained teachers and administrators.

TOPICS DISCUSSED AT THE MEETING OF THE N.E.A.

The impression which is made on the public mind by a gathering of teachers is quite as important as the impression that is made upon the members of the association itself. The following editorial from the *Tribune* of Salt Lake City gives a summary of what might be called the academic side of the summer meeting of the National Education Association:

The papers read by the teachers were of a high order of merit, and they offered a wide variety of treatment. Some teachers seemed to favor the idea of making the schools more professional than they have been heretofore, allowing the teachers a greater control and independence of the local school boards. A good deal of criticism of boards of education was indulged in, and one would suppose from some of the sentiments expressed that the teachers had on the average a rather poor opinion of boards of education in general, especially when the teachers get away from home. Other speakers, on the contrary, favored not only a full participation of the boards of education in the school work, but of parents, and indeed of the whole community; it being urged that unless the whole public is favorably interested in the school work, that work is likely to languish and to suffer. We think there can be no question that the latter view is the better one to take. At the same time, wide discussion is desirable in all matters of public concern, and so it was good to see these wide variations of opinions frankly and freely expressed.

A decided tendency was noticeable in the addresses as delivered in favor of making the schools more practical, and getting away from the old idea that the grade and the high schools are chiefly serviceable in preparing students for colleges and universities. This is the old school ideal; but a very decided tendency was manifested to get away from it. The new tendency is to introduce new studies, especially to strengthen manual training and to introduce the study of agriculture in the grade schools. The idea appears to be to make each system of school work measurably complete in itself—in the grades, the high schools, the technical schools, the vocational schools; and the colleges and the universities for those who have the time to reach them. Undoubtedly, this reaching out toward the practical idea, to make the schools as immediately serviceable as they can reasonably be made in practical utility, is the direction which the school work is likely to take. There has been in the past too much time given to studies preparatory to advanced grades and theoretical instruction in the higher institutions of learning; the result being that the pupils so instructed were left high and dry between the two ideals. They have been getting too little of a practical nature, and too much of what they will never find use for. We have no doubt that the tendency of the school instruction must tend more and more to the practical and less and less to the theoretical and to preparation for professional life. Those who wish to educate their children thoroughly on the old basis, and have the time and the money to do

so to the utmost possible extent that the higher-education institutions can provide, will utilize the grade schools and the high schools as steps in the direction sought; but those children who have neither the taste nor the time to pursue finished courses of instruction to the ultimate limits will be given a better start in life from the practical schools as changed. They will be put in touch with their environment and instructed in those things which their daily life will touch; and this unquestionably will be a great improvement over the old methods.

INNOVATIONS IN HIGH SCHOOLS

The following items are selected from the news circulars of the Bureau of Education:

"For first-year pupils only" is the motto of the Parker High School at Dayton, Ohio. The object of this school is to carry boys and girls over the difficult "Freshman" period. Superintendent Painter has recently put into the hands of every eighth-grade pupil in Dayton a booklet describing the purpose and value of a high-school education with special reference to the advantages of the Parker First-Year High School.

A number of the leading business and professional men are giving talks to the high-school students at Shelbyville, Ind., on vocational topics, thereby giving the boys and girls the benefit of the experience of the men who are doing the work and solving the problems of that community.

The Board of Education of Bristol, Conn., has passed a rule permitting high-school pupils to substitute music, either instrumental, vocal, or theoretical, for a high-school study. In order to do this they must do a specified amount of work under a teacher approved by the board of education and reports must be made by the music teacher and the parents in regard to progress and practice. The superintendent reports good results from this plan.

CONSOLIDATION OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN MONTANA

Some months ago the *School Review* reported briefly the move which was being made in Montana in the direction of consolidating her institutions of higher education. The *Tribune*, of Great Falls, Mont., published on July 23 the following article, which sets forth the result of that movement:

According to the will of the legislature as expressed at the last session the institutions of higher learning were consolidated into one institution to be known as the University of Montana. The board of education was instructed to cut out all unnecessary duplications in the courses of studies at the institutions located at Missoula, Bozeman, Dillon, and Butte, and were authorized as a means to this end to appoint a chancellor of the unified university to supervise and regulate under their instructions the schools at the separate cities

which were to constitute departments of the consolidated University of Montana. This action of the legislature was taken after it had definitely turned down a bill which proposed to consolidate the various schools physically as well as theoretically by abandoning the present separate locations of the schools and bringing them together in one city to be selected by a referendum vote of the people, every city in the state that desired the location to be given the privilege of submitting a bid for the location. The majority of the legislature felt that the effect of such a contest would be worse than the capital fight. They therefore substituted the present scheme of theoretical consolidation and the operation of the several schools at their present locations as departments of a consolidated university.

In carrying out this plan as ordered by the legislature the state board of education appointed a committee of experienced men to report on duplications that should be eliminated in the various schools. That committee has performed its task and its report has been adopted. It was not a pleasant task, because it was not possible to perform it without creating some dissatisfaction and disappointment in the schools where present courses were eliminated, and the students taking them obliged to go to another institution. Yet the committee performed its task with courage and fidelity, and perhaps it may truthfully be said that their decision involves the minimum of dissatisfaction. They followed the plan of dividing the courses given in the College of Agriculture and Mechanic Arts at Bozeman and the university at Missoula into two rough divisions, the fine arts and liberal arts going to Missoula and the mechanic arts and technical courses to Bozeman. Under this division the engineering course at Missoula was sent to Bozeman, and pharmacy and several other courses, including what they termed vocational English, which were taught at Bozeman, were sent to Missoula.